

# SINN FEIN

## *An Epitome*

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## INTRODUCTION.

Not many weeks ago, on the crest of a small, bare eminence close to one of London's prisons a group of men and women gathered to take part in one of the most amazing demonstrations which Londoners had ever witnessed. Hundreds of young Irish women with their faces turned toward Wormwood Scrubs, where their brothers and fathers were imprisoned without charge and without hope of trial, sang the songs to which a whole nation had responded and priests, whose lips had held many a word of comfort for those who suffered for an ideal, led the solemn responses to the Rosary. It is true that the London rabble seemed little impressed. It is true that a living wall of men had to be formed round these women and these priests to protect them from the missiles flung at them by rowdies. But it is certain that many a man and woman paused during those days of the hunger-strike of the Irish political prisoners to ask themselves what manner of people these might be whose devotion to a principle led them to suffer such hardships rather than fail of their ideal and whose romantic fervor made their women careless of the derision and the missiles of a London mob.

Someone might have answered, that is Sinn Fein. That is a new thing and yet no new thing. Yesterday a political theory, then an opposition party and today a democratic government which is actually functioning; Sinn Fein politically is bewilderingly new. But as a great ethical principle and as the guiding star of men's passions it is as old as the Irish people—as old as the human race itself. Its other name is Liberty.

The National Bureau of Information has long observed the need of an easily accessible summary of the history of Sinn Fein within the briefest possible compass. There is already a wealth of printed material on the subject with which this pamphlet is in no way designed to compete. It does not pretend to be exhaustive. Its main objects have been brevity and clarity. Miss Brine, Librarian of this Bureau, has drawn freely on the material at her disposal and on her own intimate associations with the work. It is hoped that this pamphlet will supply brief answers to many questions which are being asked today in regard to the Irish movement for national independence.

DANIEL T. O'CONNELL, *Director.*

*Friends of Irish Freedom  
National Bureau of Information.*

### Some Salient Dates in Modern Irish History.

- 1691 Treaty of Limerick—  
William of Orange—Sarsfield—
- 1691-1800 Penal Laws.
- 1800-1920 Irish Renaissance.
- 1800-1826 Catholic Emancipation.
- 1826-1847 Black Famine.
- 1847-1869 Disestablishment of the Church.
- 1869-1879 Rise of Home Rule Movement.
- 1879-1890 Charles Stewart Parnell.
- 1890-1900 Conflict and Disillusionment.
- 1900-1905 Organization.
- 1905-1920 Sinn Fein.

# SINN FEIN

*An Epitome*

\*\*\* \* One of the principles which America held dear was that small and weak States had as much right to their sovereignty and independence as large and strong States \* \* \* because strength and weakness have nothing to do with her principles." —PRESIDENT WILSON, May 30, 1916.

After signing the Treaty of Limerick in 1691, the gallant Sarsfield took the bulk of the fighting men out of Ireland. Those remaining suffered themselves to be disarmed. Ireland, in the grip of the conqueror, was thrown upon the defenses of the Irish language, Irish culture and Irish memory. The Penal Laws (1691-1800) only accentuated this attitude and preserved the national continuity. Far more dangerous and insidious than those repressive laws, however, were the consequences of the perfidious Act of Union of 1801, which removed the seat of government from Dublin to London. The Garrison classes, followed by the Irish aristocrats and the middle classes, shifted their political and social center to the British metropolis and became a source of strength to England and of weakness to Ireland. The influences of the English language, culture and traditions became preponderant. The only hope for the salvation of their nationality lay, for the Irish, in their sense of loss; and a national consciousness of this sort found its expression in the Gaelic League of 1893, an organization aiming at the revival of national language—not its preservation, which was already assured, but its revival as the spoken word. With this resuscitation of their language came an awakening of their national spirit, and their consciousness of the insidious penetration of the enemy. Then fol-

lowed as a natural consequence their desire to have their country for themselves, and the realization that their emancipation must be the fruit of their own efforts. Hence the demand for self-reliance in the cry: "We, ourselves"; hence the policy of the Irish Republicans: "Sinn Fein."

The "Hungarian Policy", as set forth by Arthur Griffith in his publication, "United Irishman", in 1904, had come to be known as the "Sinn Fein" policy, and was adopted by the Sinn Fein organization. This latter fused into one all the public separatist organizations under one executive called the "National Council". In 1906 Mr. Griffith wrote: "The policy of Sinn Fein purposes to bring Ireland out of the corner and make her assert her existence to the world. \* \* \* The basis of this policy is national self-reliance. No law and no series of laws can make a nation out of a people which distrusts itself." The Sinn Fein policy, then, is founded on the faith of the Irish people that they have the strength to free themselves without any outside aid, if they will only use it. This policy is more than politics; it is a national philosophy. But its adoption by the majority of the Irish people is essential to its effective constructive operation.

The Sinn Fein Movement did not contemplate an appeal to arms, but believed that passive resistance, with the majority of Ireland behind it, would be irresistible. It was composed of two sections: one, led by Arthur Griffith, wished to build upon the Constitution of 1782 and the Renunciation Act of 1783; and the other, composed of Separatists, was for independence pure and simple. As a compromise, the object of the movement was defined as "the

re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland" which satisfied the Separatists, with an addendum committing it, as a minimum to the "King, Lords and Commons" solution, which satisfied the others.

*The Renunciation Act, 1783*

"GEORGE III. (ANNO VICESIMO TERTIO)  
CAP. XXVIII.

*An act for removing and preventing all doubts which have arisen, or might arise, concerning the exclusive rights of the parliament and courts of IRELAND in matters of legislation and judicature, and for preventing any writ of error or appeal from any of his Majesty's courts in that kingdom from being received, heard, and adjudged, in any of his Majesty's courts in the kingdom of GREAT BRITAIN.*

WHEREAS, by an act "Preamble 22 of the last session of this Geo. 3 c. 53 present parliament (intituled An Act to appeal

an act, made in the sixth year of the reign of his late majesty King George the First, intituled, *An act for the better securing the dependency of the kingdom of IRELAND upon the crown of GREAT BRITAIN*; it was enacted, That the said last mentioned act, and all matters and things therein contained, should be repealed; and whereas doubts have arisen whether the provisions of the said act are sufficient to secure to the people of IRELAND the rights claimed by them to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the parliament of that kingdom, in all cases whatever, and to have all actions and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in that kingdom, decided in his Majesty's courts therein finally, and without appeal from thence; therefore, for removing all doubts respecting the same, may it please your Majesty that it may be declared and enacted; and be it declared and enacted by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present Parliament assem-

bled, and by the authority of the same,-

That the said right "The rights claimed by the people of Ireland to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the parliament of that kingdom, in all cases whatever, and to have all actions and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in that kingdom, decided in his Majesty's courts therein finally, and without appeal from thence, shall be, and it is hereby declared to be established, and ascertained for ever, and shall, at no time hereafter, be questioned or questionable.

"II. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no writ of error or appeal shall be received by any court in Great Britain.

"II. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no writ of error or appeal shall be received or adjudged, or any other proceeding be had by or in any of his Majesty's courts in this kingdom, in any action or suit at law in equity, instituted in any of his Majesty's courts in the kingdom of Ireland; and that all such writs, appeals or proceedings, shall be, and they are hereby declared null and void to all intents and purposes; and that all records, transcripts of records or proceedings, which have been transmitted from Ireland to Great Britain, by virtue of any writ of error or appeal, and upon which no judgment has been given or decree pronounced before the first day of June, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two, shall, upon application made by or in behalf of the party in whose favour judgment was given, or decree pronounced, in Ireland, be delivered to such party, or any person by him authorized to apply for and receive the same."

Arthur Griffith, the founder of the "United Irishman", took for his motto: "We must have Ireland, not for certain peers or nominees of peers, but Ireland for the Irish." He expounded the application of the Hungarian Policy to

Ireland at the 1st Convention of the National Council, November 28, 1905, Mr. Henry Martyn being in the chair. This assembly voted:

I. Resolutions of principle:

- (a) Government of the free people of Ireland by an Assembly;
- (b) National development by the civic education of the people on purely Irish lines;

II. A Constitution summing up the fifteen objects of the National Council:

1. Protection of industries and commerce;
2. Consular service;
3. A Merchant Marine;
4. Systematic Survey of mineral resources;
5. A National Bank;
6. A National Stock Exchange;
7. Courts of Arbitration;
8. National Insurance;
9. Nationalization of means of transportation and wastelands;
10. Sea fishing;
11. Boycott of products to be taken to England;
12. The Reform of the Educational System;
13. Suppression of enlistments in the English army;
14. A National Assembly of their own; and
15. The abolition of Poor Houses.

For a long time Arthur Griffith was as a "Voice crying in the Wilderness". The Sinn Fein movement attracted very little attention, and was described by government officials as "composed of certain loyal objectors". But England seemed destined to play into its hand.

The Home Rule Bill became a law upon its signature by the King on September 18, 1914. At the same time a Suspensory Law was passed, suspending its enforcement until the end of the war and the fulfilment of certain conditions. These Laws were accepted by the Irish majority, but the Ulster minority refused to submit and rose in armed rebellion. To the double appeal from

T. P. O'Connor and William Redmond, Lord Lonsdale replied for the Ulsterites by a simple "non possumus". The "Ulster Guardian" said: "The most pachydermatous person must have been repelled by Sir John Lonsdale's adamantine bigotry." The Ulsterites formed a seditious army, provided with German ammunition and drilled by regulars, for resistance to the Home Rule Act. Carson visited the Kaiser and was known to keep the Emperor's picture before him. We are told that banners proclaiming "Welcome to the Kaiser" were displayed in Ulster and that Von Kuhlmann was the honored guest of the Orange chiefs, among whom he distributed his photographs as souvenirs. Sir Edward said: "I will die in the last ditch rather than submit to Home Rule."

The men of the South of Ireland, confronted by the Army of Ulster, felt themselves justified in raising Volunteers in self-defense.

And what happened? Were the nullificationists punished and the defenders of the law and human rights upheld? Quite the contrary. The Ulsterites were upheld and even reinforced by the English, the mutinous officers of the Curragh were promoted, and, as a last straw, Carson was taken into the Coalition Cabinet. Is it any wonder that the Republicans henceforth lost all faith in English pledges?

The Easter uprising, which was a Fenian Insurrection, was not the work of Sinn Fein. Of the seven men who signed the Proclamation of the Republic, only one—John McDermot—was in any sense a Sinn Feiner. The journal, however, dubbed the Volunteers and the Insurrection "Sinn Fein" and the name which had been a reproach was taken up as a battle-cry, while the English government's policy of deporting Sinn Feiners had the double effect of rehabilitating in the public eye the men who had failed to be "out" during the fighting and of uniting them in the prisons with the Volunteers. Thus, the Insur-

rection made Sinn Fein, not Sinn Fein the Insurrection.

The end of the war found the opposing factions still irreconcilable, and the Home Rule Law still unenforced. The only hope was in Sinn Fein.

In the General Elections of 1918, the Sinn Fein candidates carried 73 out of 105 seats. The newly-elected representatives, faithful to their previous agreement not to sit at Westminster, formed an Irish Parliament—the Dail Eireann—which proclaimed simultaneously in Gaelic and in French the independence of the Irish Republic. On January 21, 1919, a month after the General Election, those of the newly elected members who were not in British prisons or in exile in America, met in Dublin, the capital of Ireland, as the only rightful authority to which the people of Ireland owed allegiance. This was done in conformity with the mandate given them by the people at the General Election, as they were asked in the Republican Manifesto to establish an Irish Republic by:

"Withdrawing the Irish Representation from the British Parliament and by denying the right and opposing the will of the British government, or any other foreign government, to legislate for Ireland.

"Making use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjugation by military force or otherwise.

"The establishment of a Constituent Assembly comprising persons chosen by Irish constituencies as the supreme National Authority to speak and act in the name of the Irish people, and to develop Ireland's social, political, and industrial life, for the welfare of the whole people of Ireland."

#### *Declaration of Independence.*

The first act of the Congress of the Republic of Ireland (The Dail Eireann, as it is called in the Irish language) was to adopt a Declaration of Independence similar in many ways to that adopted by the Continental Congress of America in

1776, setting forth that "the Irish people is by right a free people" and proclaiming Ireland a Republic.

Secondly, it demanded of the British government the withdrawal of the British Army of Occupation out of Ireland.

Thirdly, it issued an appeal to the free nations of the world for recognition of the government established by the declared will of the people of Ireland. This appeal was addressed to America in particular, as the Irish Republic was established in accordance with President Wilson's definition of the principle of Self-Determination.

Fourthly, Eamon deValera, then in Lincoln Prison, England, was unanimously elected President of the Republic, precisely after the manner in which George Washington was elected the first president of the United States.

The Irish Parliament empowered President deValera to select a Cabinet responsible to the people, and, in accordance with this decision, the President, following his escape from prison and return to Ireland, appointed various ministers from among his colleagues in the Parliament, the representatives of the people.

His appointees were the following:

Arthur Griffith, Vice-President and Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

Michael Collins, Minister of Finance.

Lion MacNeill, Minister of Education.

Pierce McCaughan, who has since died in an English prison, Minister of Agriculture. Capt. Robert Barton has since been appointed to fill the vacancy.

Countess Markievicz, Minister of Labor, first woman member of Parliament and the only cabinet officer in the world, who has lately been released after serving another period of imprisonment.

Cathal Brugha, Minister of the Interior.

In addition, President deValera named as special envoys to the Peace Conference then sitting in Paris, Sean T. O'Kelly, and George Gavan Duffy;

while Dr. Patrick MacCartan was ratified in his position as Ambassador to the United States.

Since January 21, 1919, the Irish Parliament has continued to hold regular sessions under the authority of the popular verdict at the elections and in accordance with the Declaration of Irish independence.

The elections of 1920 were an overwhelming victory for Sinn Fein, confirming the voice of the people of 1918 for a Republic.

Thus, Sinn Fein has become the great Irish Republican Party, the most powerful one in Ireland. Harassed by the English government, and held responsible for all the present agitation, yet it will go down in history as the greatest power for the development of the true Irish national spirit, the restoration of independence, and the establishment of the *de jure* and the *de facto* government of the Irish Republic.

Ireland today has its own President, Cabinet and Parliament, duly elected by the people, its accredited consular representatives in six or seven foreign countries, the United States, the Argentine Republic, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, and enjoys direct shipping communications with several countries, including the United States. In this country the Commercial Irish Line has been inaugurated by the U. S. Shipping Board, running between New York, on this side, and Cork, Dublin, and Belfast, on the other side of the Atlantic. It has six steamers—30,000 tons dead weight—with fortnightly communications. The Irish courts are functioning. The French government has intimated its intention of buying Irish cattle to replenish the depleted French herds. Education, agriculture and commerce have acquired a new stimulus and all that is needed for Ireland to step into her rightful place among the free nations is the withdrawal of the English troops and England's fulfilment of the promises by means of which she won the confidence and the loyal service of 230,949 Irish soldiers and sailors.

The Irish Parliament is composed of the best intellects in Ireland. present day, men imbued with the spirit of Grattan at the time of his struggle for the Constitution of 1782, men determined not to desist while one of them is alive. President de Valera is a profound student, a learned mathematician and a Latin scholar. Eoin MacNeill is one of the most eminent Celtologists of Europe. James Ginnell is a lawyer of long standing; and so on, down the long list. One very interesting figure is Robert Barton, formerly a Captain in the British Army, who, finding the British policy in Ireland intolerable, joined the Sinn Fein, becoming an active member and now acting as Minister of Agriculture. Under his direction great improvements have been made. It is rather surprising to find a woman in the position of Minister of Labor. The Countess Markievicz, née Gore-Booth, early became a sympathizer with the people among whom she found herself, and became an ardent worker in many movements for the betterment of humanity. She was the founder of the Boy-scouts and Girl-scouts in Ireland and did wonderful work during the Easter Rebellion, undeterred by the danger of imprisonment, which later befell her. After this it is needless to point out that the Irish Parliament has granted equal rights to men and women.

The Parliament has made it a point to resuscitate the crushed industries of the country and to give employment to the young men in order to stop the tide of emigration. The fisheries are being developed for which purpose the sum of \$50,000 has been set aside. A mineralogical survey of the country has been begun to ascertain the natural resources of the country. In one district alone it has been estimated that there are 300,000 tons of coal. Iron, copper, lead, sulphur and silver, firestone and potter's clay (which is not found to any extent in Great Britain), gypsum, barytes, rock-salt, antimony, manganese, marble, granite, slate, feldspar, soapstone and limestone, but far from being the least, peat,

which promises to become Ireland's greatest source of wealth.

An educational system is developing to fit the Irish children for life in Ireland. The industrial school so well established by Sir Horace Plunkett, I am told, has been taken over by Sinn Fein since its appropriation was withdrawn by the English government. A national University has also been established, with colleges at Dublin, Belfast and Cork.

The functioning of the Sinn Fein Courts is most interesting. Without any of the outward show of pomp and ceremony, the courts assemble at some convenient point. One session is described as having been held in "a vast detached house looking out over the bay, an eighteenth century mansion built for some rich merchant or captain before the Act of Union, the invention of steamships, and the decline of Galway's greatness." \* \* \* Upstairs in a fine room that was a saloon running the whole length of the house the court met. At a table in the centre sat the registrar and the three arbitrators for the night, a priest as president and two professional men from the elected panel. All round the room were the litigants and friends—small farmers and graziers who snatch a livelihood off the rocks or wonder whether the winter rains will flood all or only half their land. The room was draped with Sinn Fein colours, and on the wall were photographs of the men who died in the Easter rising." The litigants swear before the trial that they will abide by the decision of the court and there is seldom any trouble about carrying it out. I have heard of only one such case. These courts prevent much trouble and are building up a respect for positive law based upon natural and divine law.

In spite of this established Irish Republic, England still talks of Home Rule.

Sir Auckland Geddes, before coming to Washington as British Ambassador, said of the new Home Rule Bill of 1920, that it was "a sincere attempt to place definitely and finally in the hands of the elected representatives of the Irish people the duty and responsibility of working out their own salvation and the salvation of their country."

George W. Russell, the Famous "A.E.", replied: "The Bill which Sir Auckland Geddes helped to plan does not enable Ireland to work out its own salvation. We in Ireland ask for powers to enable us to build up a civilization which will fit our character and genius as the glove fits the hand. We cannot do that while an external power controls our taxation, revenues and trade policy.

\* \* \* We desire to create a civilization of our own, expressing our nature and genius; and therefore we ask for freedom and power. That freedom and that power are not given to us by the schemes which the British Ambassador to America helped to devise. In spite of his fine words about freedom, he was only tightening our chains; and I write this in order that no American who is interested in Ireland may be deceived. It is not self-government the British are bestowing on us; they are digging for us a dungeon even deeper than Pitt digged for us in the Act of Union."

A nation which will consistently ignore the conqueror, and proceed to the formation of a voluntary self-government, would compel the occupying power to yield or to provide an armed guard for every unit of the subjugated people. That is what the Republicans are doing in Ireland today, and nothing short of absolute independence will satisfy the Irish people. Through sorrow and sacrifice, the new Republic is coming into her own.